



Capitalist, Evolution, Financial Innovations and Financial Literacy: A Study of their Dynamics in Shaping Modern Capitalism

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Abstract

Finance has had its root in human history since human being started a settled civilized life. As production for trade took a shape, various means of transactions and storage of value kept on evolving. Gradually, finance took the center stage with the evolution of modern capitalism. In early stages the financial instruments remained a scattered individual means of financial practice, no central regulation existed in the early era. Hence the acquaintance with these instruments was also confined to individual users, the traders, particularly. Since economic productivity was quite low, ordinary individuals had little surplus to save, not many had much to do with financial literacy. The modern capitalism required industrial workers, surplus of agricultural products, more consumers for market, more means of production to produce trade surplus and more financial savings and instruments to channelize investments. Also the producers were required to be alienated from the product of labour so that the trade of commodities could be taken in control by the trading class. Also the means of production, which was otherwise the ownership of the households, was to be turned marketable to facilitate the transfer the ownership from ordinary owners to the trading class. The trinity of commodity production, wage labour and market system altogether had to evolve for capitalism to come into existence. Accordingly, various financial instruments took shape, the traditional ones became more formalized and many new ones were invented. The evolution of different forms of business, the 'company' form particularly, helped this process in a big way. Simultaneously, the financial anarchy put the systems in turmoil and hence regulatory bodies became a compulsion. These regulatory bodies assumed the twin role of regulation of financial markets, financial facilitation, as well as creating financial literacy among ordinary people to link their savings to the mainstream trade and commerce lines. The paper attempts to portray the evolution of modern financial system and find out how this evolution has been linked to the financial literacy of the common masses. Also the paper would throw lights on imminent market and systemic hazards caused by excess reliance on financialisation of economic system.

Keywords: Financial Instruments, Financial Regulation, Financial Literacy, Financialisation, Financial Bubble, Financial Crisis, Regulatory Mechanism, Industrial Capitalism, Financial Capitalism.

1. Introduction

Financial literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, and understanding of financial concepts, tools, and products that enable individuals to make informed and effective financial decisions. It encompasses the ability to manage personal finances, budget effectively, save and invest wisely, borrow responsibly, and understand financial risks and opportunities. [1] Financial literacy involves understanding fundamental concepts such as income, expenses, budgeting, savings, debt, interest rates, inflation, taxes, investments, insurance, and

retirement planning. It also includes being aware of financial products and services available in the market, such as bank accounts, credit cards, loans, mutual funds, stocks, bonds, and insurance policies. By being financially literate, individuals are equipped to make informed decisions about their money, set and achieve financial goals, effectively manage their income and expenses, protect themselves from financial pitfalls, and plan for their future financial well-being. It helps individuals navigate the complex world of finance, make



optimal use of financial resources, and avoid common financial mistakes. Financial literacy is crucial for individuals of all ages and backgrounds, as it empowers them to take control of their financial lives, build wealth, and achieve financial security. It also plays a vital role in promoting economic growth and stability at both individual and societal levels. Financial institutions play a crucial role in promoting financial literacy. [2] They have a direct impact on individuals' financial lives and are well-positioned to provide education, resources, and guidance to enhance financial literacy. Here are some ways financial institutions contribute to financial literacy:

1.1. Role of Financial Literacy in Shaping Modern Capitalism

Financial literacy has played significant role in shaping modern capitalism in several ways. Financial literacy empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their personal finances, investments, and consumption patterns. It helps individuals understand financial products, evaluate risks and returns, and make choices aligned with their financial goals. Informed decision-making by consumers contributes to the efficient functioning of financial markets and promotes responsible financial behavior. [3] Financial literacy is also crucial for investor protection. It enables individuals to understand their rights and responsibilities as investors, assess the risks associated with different investment options, and recognize fraudulent schemes. A financially literate population is more likely to make sound investment choices, avoid scams, and safeguard their financial interests. Many more contributions of financial literacy in the strengthening of modern capitalism can be listed,

Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Financial literacy fosters entrepreneurship and innovation by equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage their own businesses. Entrepreneurs need to understand financial concepts such as budgeting, cash flow management, and financing options to effectively run their ventures. Financial literacy encourages entrepreneurial endeavors, which drive economic growth and job creation. [4]

Consumer Confidence and Financial Inclusion: A

financially literate population is more likely to have confidence in the financial system, leading to increased participation and trust in financial institutions. Financial literacy also promotes financial inclusion by enabling individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds to access and utilize financial services effectively. It helps individuals understand banking, credit, insurance, and other financial tools, thus reducing barriers to financial access.

Economic Stability: Financial literacy contributes to overall economic stability. It enhances the resilience of individuals and households to financial shocks, reducing the likelihood of financial distress and economic downturns. When individuals have the knowledge to manage their finances prudently, it leads to healthier personal financial situations, reducing systemic risks and promoting economic stability at the macro level.

Policy Advocacy and Financial Regulation: A financially literate population can advocate for policies and regulations that promote transparency, fairness, and accountability in the financial sector. Financially literate individuals can engage in public discourse, participate in consultations, and provide valuable input to shape policies that benefit the wider society. Moreover, financial literacy helps individuals understand their rights as consumers and hold financial institutions accountable for their actions. [5]

1.2. Role of Financial Literacy in Shaping an Empowered and Inclusive Society

Promoting financial literacy is essential for ensuring that individuals can navigate the complexities of modern capitalism, make informed decisions, and actively participate in the economy. By equipping individuals with financial knowledge and skills, societies can create a more inclusive, transparent, and resilient financial system that benefits both individuals and the overall economy. Many such role of financial literacy can be understood from the following points:

Education and Outreach: Financial institutions often conduct financial literacy programs and initiatives to educate their customers and the wider community. These can include workshops, seminars,



webinars, and online resources covering various financial topics such as budgeting, saving, investing, and debt management. These efforts aim to improve financial knowledge and empower individuals to make informed decisions.

Financial Products and Services: Financial institutions design their products and services to meet the diverse needs of customers. Through clear and transparent communication, they can educate customers about the features, benefits, and potential risks associated with different financial products. This helps individuals understand their options and make appropriate choices based on their financial goals and circumstances.

Financial Counselling and Advisory Services: Many financial institutions offer financial counselling and advisory services to their customers. These services provide personalized guidance on topics such as debt management, investment strategies, retirement planning, and financial goal setting. By providing expert advice, financial institutions help individuals navigate complex financial decisions and improve their overall financial well-being.

Financial Literacy Tools and Resources: Financial institutions develop and provide tools and resources to enhance financial literacy. These can include budgeting apps, online calculators, investment guides, and educational materials on their websites or through mobile applications. By offering these resources, financial institutions make financial information accessible and enable individuals to improve their financial knowledge and skills.

Regulatory Compliance and Consumer Protection: Financial institutions operate within regulatory frameworks to ensure fair and transparent practices. This includes providing clear disclosures and consumer protection measures. By promoting responsible and ethical financial behavior, financial institutions contribute to the overall financial literacy landscape and build trust among consumers.

Partnerships and Collaborations: Financial institutions often collaborate with government agencies, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations to promote financial literacy. These

partnerships can involve joint initiatives, research studies, and community outreach programs aimed at increasing financial knowledge and skills among diverse populations.

It's important to note that the extent of financial literacy initiatives and contributions can vary among different financial institutions. However, many institutions recognize the value of financial literacy and actively work towards empowering individuals with the knowledge and tools to make sound financial decisions. [6]

2. Financial Literacy in India

Financial literacy in India can be referred to quite early days in various trades and borrowing and lending obligations. Various financial products of Indian origin can be seen in the form of 'hundies' and 'pratibhuties'. Various practices like budgeting, saving, investing, borrowing, insurance, retirement planning, and understanding financial institutions and markets have a long history in India. Financial literacy is crucial in India due to its large and diverse population, rapid economic growth, and increasing complexity of financial products and services. It empowers individuals to make informed financial decisions, manage their personal finances effectively, and protect themselves from potential financial risks. [7]

Some key points about financial literacy in India:

Government Initiatives: The Indian government has taken several initiatives to promote financial literacy. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), and other regulatory bodies have implemented various programs and campaigns to educate the public about financial matters. For instance, the RBI's National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE) aims to enhance financial literacy at different stages of life.

Financial Education Programs: Several financial institutions, banks, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) conduct financial education programs to improve financial literacy. These programs include workshops, seminars, online courses, and mobile apps designed to educate individuals on money management, investment options, and banking services.

School Curriculum: Financial literacy is being



integrated into school curricula to ensure children receive early exposure to financial concepts. Some states in India have introduced financial education as a mandatory subject in schools to enhance financial literacy among students.

Digital Financial Literacy: With the increasing adoption of digital financial services and mobile banking, efforts are being made to enhance digital financial literacy. People need to understand concepts such as online transactions, digital payments, cybersecurity, and data privacy to effectively navigate the digital financial landscape.

Investor Awareness: SEBI has implemented various investor awareness programs to educate individuals about investing in securities markets and protect them from fraudulent activities. These programs aim to promote investor confidence and ensure a fair and transparent investment environment.

Financial Inclusion: Financial literacy plays a vital role in promoting financial inclusion. By empowering individuals with knowledge and skills, financial literacy helps them access and effectively use financial services, especially in rural and underserved areas.

Despite efforts to promote financial literacy, there are challenges to overcome. These include limited access to quality financial education, language barriers, low awareness levels, and the need for continuous financial education to keep up with evolving financial products and services. Enhancing financial literacy in India is an ongoing process that requires collaboration between government, financial institutions, educators, and civil society organizations. By promoting financial literacy, India aims to improve financial well-being, encourage savings and investment habits, and foster a financially empowered society. [8]

2.1. Role of SEBI and other Institutions in Promoting Financial Literacy in India

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) plays a significant role in promoting financial literacy in India, particularly in the context of securities markets and investor education. Here are some key roles and initiatives of SEBI in financial literacy: [9]

Investor Awareness Programs: SEBI conducts various investor awareness programs to educate and empower investors. These programs aim to create awareness about investment opportunities, risks, and best practices in the securities markets. They cover topics such as understanding investment products, assessing risk profiles, reading financial statements, and making informed investment decisions.

Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF): SEBI oversees the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF), which aims to educate investors and protect their interests. The fund is utilized for conducting investor education programs, promoting financial literacy, and providing support to investors who have suffered financial losses due to non-compliant or defunct entities.

Regulatory Guidelines: SEBI issues guidelines and regulations that emphasize the importance of financial literacy and investor education. These guidelines include provisions for clear and accurate disclosure of information by companies, mutual funds, and other market intermediaries. By setting standards for transparency and disclosure, SEBI helps investors make informed decisions.

Collaboration and Partnerships: SEBI collaborates with various stakeholders, including educational institutions, industry associations, and market participants, to enhance financial literacy. These collaborations involve joint initiatives, research studies, and awareness campaigns aimed at educating investors and raising awareness about market risks, investor rights, and the benefits of informed investing.

Digital Initiatives: SEBI recognizes the growing importance of digital platforms and technology in financial literacy. It has developed online portals and mobile applications to disseminate information, provide investor services, and facilitate investor grievances. These digital initiatives aim to make financial information easily accessible and empower investors to take informed decisions.

Investor Grievance Redressal: SEBI facilitates the redressal of investor grievances through its Investor Grievance Redressal Mechanism. This mechanism ensures that investor complaints are resolved in a timely and fair manner, promoting investor



confidence and trust in the securities markets.

Overall, SEBI plays a vital role in promoting financial literacy by providing education, guidelines, and platforms for investor awareness. Its initiatives aim to equip investors with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the securities markets, make informed investment decisions, and protect their interests. [10]

National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE): The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched the NSFE in 2013 to improve financial literacy in India. As of 2021, the NSFE had reached around 600,000 people through various programs and initiatives.

Financial Inclusion: As of 2021, the Global Findex Database reported that 79% of adults (above 15 years) in India have a bank account, indicating improved financial inclusion. However, having a bank account doesn't necessarily imply high financial literacy.

Financial Literacy Assessments: The RBI conducted financial literacy assessments in various states of India. For example, the survey conducted in 2019 revealed that the average financial literacy rate was around 64% among adults in urban areas and 56% in rural areas. The survey assessed knowledge on basic financial concepts, banking, savings, and insurance.

Gender Gap: Financial literacy rates tend to show a gender gap in India. The 2019 survey mentioned above indicated that financial literacy among women was comparatively lower than among men. Efforts have been made to bridge this gap through targeted initiatives and programs.

School Education: Some states in India have introduced financial education as a mandatory subject in school curricula. For instance, Maharashtra made financial literacy a part of the school curriculum in 2017. However, the implementation and coverage of financial education programs can vary across states.

Digital Financial Literacy: With the increasing adoption of digital financial services, efforts have been made to improve digital financial literacy. The Digital India campaign, launched by the Indian government, aimed to enhance digital literacy and

empower citizens to use digital platforms for financial transactions.

It is important to note that financial literacy rates can vary across different regions, socioeconomic backgrounds, and demographic groups within India. The data provided above is a general overview, and for the most accurate and up-to-date information, it is recommended to refer to official reports and surveys conducted by organizations such as the RBI, SEBI, and other government bodies focused on financial education. [11]

2.2. Role of International Organizations in Enhancing Financial Literacy

International organizations play a significant role in promoting financial literacy globally. Here are some key roles and contributions of international organizations in the field of financial literacy:

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): The OECD conducts research, collects data, and develops guidelines on financial education. It publishes reports and studies on financial literacy and provides policy recommendations to member countries. The OECD also facilitates international cooperation and knowledge sharing among countries to enhance financial literacy efforts. [12]

World Bank Group: The World Bank supports financial literacy initiatives through research, technical assistance, and funding. It works with governments and partners to develop strategies, programs, and policies that promote financial education and inclusion. The World Bank also conducts surveys, such as the Global Findex, to measure financial inclusion and literacy worldwide.

International Monetary Fund (IMF): The IMF emphasizes financial education and literacy as part of its mission to promote global financial stability. It provides technical assistance and training to member countries on financial literacy programs and policies. The IMF also incorporates financial literacy considerations in its economic and financial sector assessments and provides guidance on consumer protection and financial stability.

United Nations (UN): The UN encourages financial literacy to achieve sustainable development and reduce poverty. It promotes financial inclusion and



education through its agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). The UN also includes financial literacy as part of its broader agenda on economic empowerment and gender equality.

Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion (GPFI): The GPFI, a G20 initiative, focuses on promoting financial inclusion and literacy globally. It brings together policymakers, regulators, and international organizations to coordinate efforts and share best practices. The GPFI supports initiatives such as the Maya Declaration, which aims to advance financial inclusion and literacy.

International Network on Financial Education (INFE): The INFE, hosted by the OECD, is a global network of policymakers and experts working on financial education. It facilitates knowledge sharing, research collaboration, and the development of good practices in financial education. The INFE supports member countries in designing and implementing effective financial literacy strategies.

These international organizations collaborate with governments, financial institutions, and civil society to raise awareness, develop educational materials, provide technical assistance, and conduct research to improve financial literacy worldwide. They play a crucial role in shaping policies, standards, and practices that promote financial education and empower individuals to make informed financial decisions.

3. Financial Exposures and Financial Frauds in India

The financial exposures of masses refer to the vulnerabilities and risks that individuals and households face in their financial lives. These exposures can vary and include factors such as lack of financial knowledge, inadequate access to financial services, high levels of debt, limited savings, and reliance on informal financial channels. When individuals are exposed to such risks without sufficient financial literacy, they may be more susceptible to financial frauds and scams. 39 percent of families claim to be victims of online financial frauds in India. Financial frauds are deceptive or illegal practices aimed at obtaining financial gains

through deceit or manipulation. They can take various forms, including Ponzi schemes, investment scams, identity theft, phishing, pyramid schemes, and fraudulent financial products. Financial frauds often target individuals with limited financial knowledge, who may be more susceptible to misleading or false promises of high returns or quick wealth accumulation. It is important for individuals to be aware of the potential financial exposures they face and to be cautious about financial frauds. Building financial literacy and knowledge can help individuals make informed decisions, recognize warning signs, and protect themselves from fraudulent activities. Financial education programs and awareness campaigns play a crucial role in equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to identify and avoid financial frauds. Regulatory authorities and financial institutions also have a role to play in protecting consumers from financial frauds. They implement measures such as setting regulations and guidelines, conducting investigations, and educating the public about potential risks and fraud prevention. Reporting suspicious activities to the appropriate authorities is crucial in combating financial frauds and safeguarding the interests of the masses. It is worth noting that financial exposures and frauds can vary across different countries, regions, and socioeconomic groups. It is important to stay updated on local regulations, consumer protection initiatives, and resources provided by regulatory bodies to mitigate financial exposures and combat financial frauds effectively.

3.1. Unregulated Financial Exposure may lead to Financial Crises

Excessive exposure to the financial system can indeed contribute to financial crises. When individuals, institutions, or economies become heavily interconnected with the financial system, they can face significant risks and vulnerabilities. Here are a few ways in which excessive exposure to the financial system can lead to financial crises:

Overleveraging: Excessive borrowing and high levels of debt can create vulnerabilities in the financial system. When individuals, companies, or even countries take on too much debt relative to their



income or resources, they become more susceptible to financial shocks and economic downturns. If a significant number of borrowers are unable to repay their debts, it can trigger a chain reaction of defaults and financial instability.

Asset Price Bubbles: Excessive exposure to the financial system can contribute to the formation of asset price bubbles. When individuals or institutions invest heavily in certain assets, such as real estate or stocks, their prices can become detached from their underlying fundamentals. If these bubbles burst, it can lead to significant losses, financial market disruptions, and systemic risks.

Interconnectedness and Contagion: When financial institutions and markets are highly interconnected, problems in one institution or sector can quickly spread to others, leading to a contagion effect. For example, if a major financial institution faces financial distress or failure, it can cause panic and loss of confidence in the broader financial system, triggering a systemic crisis.

Lack of Risk Management and Oversight: Excessive exposure to the financial system can also result from inadequate risk management practices and regulatory oversight. If financial institutions take on excessive risks without proper safeguards, it can amplify the impact of financial shocks and increase the likelihood of crises. Weak regulatory frameworks or lax enforcement can exacerbate these risks by allowing risky behaviour to go unchecked. It is important to note that while excessive exposure to the financial system can contribute to financial crises, it is usually not the sole cause. Other factors, such as macroeconomic imbalances, speculative behaviour, policy failures, and external shocks, can also play significant roles in triggering and amplifying financial crises. To mitigate the risks associated with excessive exposure, prudent risk management practices, robust regulatory frameworks, effective oversight, and promoting financial literacy among individuals and institutions are crucial. These measures help ensure that the financial system operates in a stable and sustainable manner, reducing the likelihood of financial crises.

Conclusion

Finance and financial literacy have been in the root

of all sorts of trading and exchange practices in the world from time immemorial and has led to the evolution of societies across the globe. It has played a crucial role in the journey of civilization through the ages. Capitalism, in particular, has been a huge beneficiary of financial innovations. It has facilitated the mobilization of resources, investment, speculation, and accumulation. At the same time, it has also been responsible for staggering economic inequality, deprivation and marginalization. With technological development it gave a tremendous boost to economic development, to a small section though, yet it made the world go through the trauma of unending chain of economic crises, as also enormously increasing number of financial frauds and irregularities. Therefore, it is imperative that the regulatory mechanism and social and economic watchdogs stay alert to keep a check on the evils to make it more effective in socio-economic progress, sustainable and inclusive in the true sense of the word. It will test the ability and intent both of the modern financial capitalist system.

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